

## 2015 National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) Key Points

### Overview

1. CDC established National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) in 2005 to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.  
**NIVW is scheduled for December 6-12, 2015.**
  - a) Flu vaccination coverage estimates from past years have shown that influenza vaccination activity drops quickly after the end of November. CDC and its partners want to remind you that even though the holiday season has arrived, it is not too late to get your flu vaccine.
  - b) As long as flu viruses are spreading and causing illness, vaccination can provide protection against the flu and should continue.
  - c) Even if you haven't yet been vaccinated and have already gotten sick with one flu virus, you can still benefit from vaccination since the flu vaccine protects against three or four different flu viruses (depending on which flu vaccine you get).
2. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against influenza disease.
3. Another goal of NIVW is to communicate the importance of flu vaccination for people who are at high risk for developing flu-related complications.
  - a) People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease, and people aged 65 years and older.
  - b) For people at high risk, getting the flu can mean developing serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, or a worsening of existing health conditions, which can lead to hospitalization or death.
  - c) A full list of "People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications" is available at [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high\\_risk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm).

### Vaccination

4. The flu vaccine is the best tool available to protect against this potentially serious disease.
5. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, missed work due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations.
6. Despite the unpredictable nature of the flu, you should know:
  - a) You need the 2015-2016 flu vaccine for optimal protection against the flu this season.
  - b) Yearly vaccination is needed because:
    - i. Flu viruses are always changing, and the vaccine is updated each year to better match circulating influenza viruses, and
    - ii. Immune protection from vaccination declines over time so vaccination is recommended every season for the best protection against the flu.
  - c) It takes about two weeks after vaccination for the immune system to build the antibodies your body needs in order to provide protection against the flu.

- d) In the United States, flu activity is *usually* highest between December and February and can last as late as May. As long as flu viruses are circulating, it's not too late to get vaccinated.
  - e) With flu activity starting to increase and family and friends gathering for the holidays, now is a great time to get a flu vaccine to protect yourself and your loved ones.
7. We hope that NIVW will serve as a reminder to parents and caregivers of children about the importance of flu vaccination in general and the fact that some children may need two doses of flu vaccine this season to be fully protected.
- a) Children 6 months through 8 years old who are getting vaccinated for the first time will need two doses of flu vaccine.
  - b) Some children in this age group who have received influenza vaccine previously also will need two doses of vaccine this season to be fully protected.
  - c) Your child's doctor or other health care professional can tell you if your child needs two doses.
8. There are many choices available for flu vaccine, both in terms of where to get vaccinated and what vaccine to get.
- a) Flu vaccines made to protect against three different flu viruses (called "trivalent" vaccines) are available this season. In addition, flu vaccines made to protect against four different flu viruses (called "quadrivalent" vaccines) also are available.
  - b) Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores and pharmacies, and health centers, as well as by many employers and schools.
  - c) Visit <http://vaccine.healthmap.org>, if you need help finding flu vaccine near you.
  - d) The most important thing is for everyone 6 months and older to get a flu vaccine every year, regardless of the vaccine option chosen. If you have questions about which vaccine is best for you, talk to your doctor or other health care professional.
9. Millions of doses of influenza vaccine have been administered to people safely for decades.
10. Once vaccinated, you can enjoy this holiday season knowing that you have taken the single best step to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu.